



What is the EAP?

The Employee Assistance Program's (EAP) mission is to ensure the well-being of employees by assisting them in resolving issues that may be adversely impacting work or home. The EAP provides one-on-one problem assessment, short-term counseling, referrals to community resources and crisis intervention.

In addition to working with you on an individual basis, we conduct a variety of educational workshops and classes. We are frequently asked to speak at employee orientation sessions and offer monthly supervisor training classes.

Visit the EAP website:

<http://dilorenzo.narmc.amedd.army.mil/Pages/eappers.aspx>

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PERSPECTIVES

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Is it More than the Blues?

By Stacie Chapman, LCPC

As the days get shorter and the year comes to an end, many people are focused on the holidays, time with family and what the forecast for snow might be. However, for others, the months between November and February are met with a great deal of dread and loathing. To this population, winter means an increase in irritability, sadness, lethargy and a lack of interest in pleasurable activities. If this sounds like you, you might be experiencing symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D.).

Seasonal Affective Disorder affects 14 million Americans, most of whom are women. Usually symptoms start to occur around October/November and last well into March/April. According to Mental Health America, symptoms include: depression, anxiety, trouble sleeping, overeating/an increased desire for carbohydrates, and a decrease in desire engage in social activities.



While an exact cause for S.A.D. hasn't been pinpointed, researchers have identified some factors that seem to play a key role in the development of the disorder. Many people who experience S.A.D. have family members that have a history of diagnosed depression. The first onset of S.A.D. tends to occur between the ages of 18 and 30. In addition to familial history and age, sunlight plays a key role in contributing to S.A.D. During winter, we are exposed to less sunlight and shorter days. Without the sun, we are at a increase risk for depression. Studies have shown that the further North a person lives, the more their risk for S.A.D. increases.

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Balancing Work & Family: Taking a Hard Look at Stress

Kathleen Haas, LCSW, CAC



The numbers:

- **24% of employees work over 6 hours a week without pay.**
- **18% work more than 48 hours a week.**
- **83% check their email at least once a day while on vacation.**

http://www.phwa.org/dl.2010phwp_fact_sheet.pdf

Many employees are also parents, spouses and caretakers for elderly parents. The majority work at least forty hours a week and it is not uncommon for many to take work home with them daily and spend an additional hour or two “to finish up.”

Our work lives often define our identity. It is the first question asked by new acquaintances when first introduced: “What do you do?” You politely respond: “I am an analyst, a librarian, a program manager.” We are what we do right? Well, perhaps not. When it comes to balancing work and family life, we are called to be much more than our job.

Responsibilities outside of work are being given a closer and more realistic look these days. According to the Employee Assistance Professionals Association in Arlington, Virginia, the number of stress-related disability claims by American employees has recently doubled.

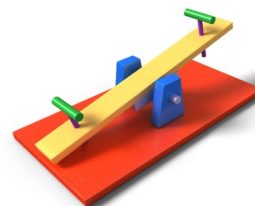
The American Institute of Stress estimates that stress related industry losses range between \$200 billion and \$300 billion annually. Such performance and collateral losses occur in response to employee actions under stress. In a study examining work and family stress in the adult labor force, researchers found that employees experiencing work related stress had nearly a 47% increase of stress experienced at home.

There are many contributors to work and family life imbalance. Researchers are taking a hard look at how the advancement of technology in the workplace is changing things. As Boswell and Olson-Buchanan stated in their study of work attitudes and work-life conflicts, “increasingly sophisticated and affordable technologies make it more feasible for employees to keep contact with work”. In some cases, work contact is not only possible, but expected. As a result, technology can mean more unpaid work hours.




Stress and the disruption in work life balance also have physical and psychological consequences. Persistent stress can result in cardiovascular disease, a weaker immune system, frequent headaches, stiff muscles and back aches. Unaddressed problems with stress may also lead to increased abuse of alcohol, binge eating, and smoking. Psychological symptoms from chronic stress often can include irritability, poor concentration, feelings of insecurity and exhaustion. (Journal of Management 2007; Family Relations Journal 2002; www.en.wikipedia.org 2012)

Tips for Positively Managing Your “Work & Family Balance”:

- Get organized and develop a family calendar.
- Prioritize and safeguard time with family and friends weekly.
- Spend time reflecting on your personal standards for a joyful life.
- Work on letting go of the “Perfectionist” myth.
- Set aside at least 30 minutes daily for yourself to relax and recharge.



Upcoming Workshops - PERS

November 2012		
1 Supervisory Training (for Supervisors and Managers of Civilian Personnel) 9:30 - 11:30 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon	7 Psychological Resiliency 9:00 - 11:00 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon	8 & 15 Parent Support Group Exploratory Discussions 12:00 - 1:00 pm Pentagon Chapel #1E438
14 Sleep Hygiene 9:30-10:30 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon		29 Positive Aging 9:30-11:30 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon
December 2012		
5 Balancing Work & Family 9:30 - 11:00 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon	6 Supervisory Training (for Supervisors and Managers of Civilian Personnel) 9:30 - 11:30 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon	13 Retirement in Mind 9:30 - 11:30 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon
January 2013		
10 Supervisory Training (for Supervisors and Managers of Civilian Personnel) 9:30 - 11:30 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon	16 Sleep Hygiene 10:00 - 11:00 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon	17 Stress Management 9:30 - 11:30 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon
	24 Time Management 9:30 -11:00 am Upton Conference Rm. (#219) DTHC, Pentagon	

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOINING A PARENT SUPPORT GROUP?

November 8th and 15th 2012 from 12 noon to 1pm our Staff and the office of the Pentagon's Family Life Chaplain are inviting any parent or caretaker of middle school or high school aged students to come out and participate in a discussion session. We will be exploring interest in a possible Parent Support Group for youth with emotional or behavioral issues at the Pentagon starting in 2013.

If you are interested in attending one or both of the sessions to be held in the Pentagon Chapel #1E438, **registration is required**. Please call the Pentagon Employee Assistance Program office at 703-692-8917 to register or email DTHC.PERS@health.mil.

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Don't despair if you are one of the 14 million people who wish Fall would just give way to Spring. There are several treatments available for S.A.D. that have helped people survive the cold winter months. Health professionals recommend light therapy as a first line treatment, before medication and therapy. Taking one hour out of the day and engaging in exposure to bright light can dramatically improve one's mood and anxiety. Studies show that one hour of walking in the winter sunlight is as effective as two and a half hours under a bright, artificial light source.

If walking outdoors isn't your idea of fun, talk to your doctor about getting an artificial light source. Just sitting in front of the light box for approximately 30 to 90 minutes per day will decrease S.A.D. symptoms to manageable levels. You should work closely with a medical professional to learn how to properly use the light box, including when and for how long.

Prescription medications have also been shown to help reduce symptoms. Any medication should be monitored by a doctor for side effects and be started prior to the winter months in order to have the maximum impact on symptoms. In some cases, people with S.A.D. find that therapy is helpful in addition to medication and light box treatment. It can be useful to work with a therapist to establish new behaviors to cope with the negative thoughts experienced in the winter months.



If you or someone you know experiences any of the symptoms described in this article, please consider consulting the EAP or your doctor for further help and information. There is also a fantastic book called *Winter Blues: Everything you Need to Know to Beat Seasonal Affective Disorder* by Dr. Norman E. Rosenthal that provides a more extensive description of symptoms, treatment and the history of the disorder.

Holiday Stress Buster Tips:

- Examine Your Intentions. Traditionally, the holidays are for giving gifts that say "Thank you" or "I love you" to friends and family. Don't get caught in the overspending trap this year. Give without giving up your financial freedom. Consider exchanging services instead of purchased gifts. Offer to babysit or perform house services instead.
- Creative surprises are wonderful, but asking people what they want makes shopping easier.
- Browse catalogs early, address holiday cards while watching T.V. or shop online.
- Ask for help. If you have guests, have everyone bring part of the meal.
- Don't feel guilty if you're not happy. Holiday depression or feeling blue is often normal and temporary.
- Start new traditions that create opportunities for reflection and relaxation.

